

**HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING  
HELD IN THE  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
ROOM #318  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Chairwoman Scuccimarra, Legislators Gouldman & Sayegh**

**Tuesday**

**6:00PM**

**July 10, 2018**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 P.M. by Chairwoman Scuccimarra who requested that Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Sayegh was absent, while Legislator Gouldman and Chairwoman Scuccimarra were present. Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated Legislator Albano would sit in Legislator Sayegh's place.

**Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – June 12, 2018**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the agenda would be addressed out of order.

**Item #7 - Approval/Health Department/Septic System Replacement Program for Lake Oscawana**

Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski stated New York State has \$75 million to spend on septic system repairs over a five (5) year period. He stated certain areas around water bodies were chosen by the State for repairs. He stated Lake Oscawana was selected because it is an impaired body of water. He stated there is \$75,000 available for homeowners with a house within 250 feet of the lake. He stated they would be reimbursed 50% or up to \$10,000 for any type of septic repair work.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this is for if a septic system is compromised or in failure.

Director Budzinski stated if it is currently failing or likely to fail.

Legislator Gouldman questioned the usual cost for a septic tank replacement.

Legislator Albano stated it is usually under \$5,000 but it depends on the situation.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated these homes used to be used as summer residences but now they are used year round. She questioned what would happen in the second year of the program.

Director Budzinski stated the funding would rollover to the second year.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if it would be the same amount of funding.

Director Budzinski stated it depends on how many other counties apply and participate.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if there is a chance that another lake in Putnam County could be selected.

Director Budzinski stated it is possible because there are other impaired water bodies in Putnam County.

Legislator Albano questioned if communities had to apply for the program or if the State selected the bodies of water.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how a homeowner would apply for the program.

Director Budzinski stated after the program is finalized the County will receive template forms for people who are interested.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the funding is first come, first served.

Director Budzinski stated he is unsure.

Legislator Gouldman questioned when the program will start.

Director Budzinski stated after the Legislature approves it and the contracts with the State are signed.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if there is anything on the County website regarding this initiative.

Director Budzinski stated they did not want to put out information before the program was approved.

Legislator Nacerino questioned how many homeowners are eligible.

Director Budzinski stated he does not have that figure yet. He stated he would be getting that number from the GIS Department when they are ready to start the program. He stated he believes the distance from the lake will be increased after the first round of funding.

Legislator Albano questioned who determined the 250 foot distance requirement.

Director Budzinski stated the State did.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move Approval/Health Department/Septic System Replacement Program for Lake Oscawana to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

### **Item #8 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 18A048/Health Department/Performance Incentive Initiative**

Acting Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Nesheiwat stated the Health Department recently received \$55,000 in grant funding. He stated the funding has to be used for specific reasons. He stated one item that will be purchased is a drone. He stated the drone will be used to inspect lakes in Putnam County for Blue-Green Algae. He noted that this funding needs to be utilized or the County will lose the money.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move Budgetary Amendment 18A048/Health Department/Performance Incentive Initiative to the Audit & Administration Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

### **Item #4 - Discussion/Tobacco Purchase Age**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra introduced Jim Calvin, President of the New York State Association of Convenience Stores (NYACS).

Mr. Calvin commended the Legislature for hearing all sides of this issue. He stated the tobacco purchase age is not exclusively a public health issue, it is also a small business issue. He stated retailers who sell legal tobacco products to adults would be impacted by raising the age to 21. He stated there are close to 100 retailers in Putnam County who are licensed with the State to sell tobacco products and they are doing their job by not selling tobacco to minors. He stated the County Health Department carries out undercover inspections to make sure retailers are not selling tobacco to minors. He stated retailers throughout New York State have a 95% compliance rate, while Putnam County has a 97% compliance rate. He stated NYACS opposes a higher purchase age because they believe it will not have the desired effect. He stated the vast majority of young teens who use tobacco products get these products through older relatives and acquaintances. He stated if a 15 year old can figure out a way to circumvent the tobacco purchase age, then a 19 year old will as well. He stated Dutchess County has decided to not move forward with raising the age to 21. He stated retailers would be forced to forfeit legitimate sales, when younger teens regrettably will still be able to get tobacco products elsewhere.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the tobacco 21 law will not eliminate smoking and tobacco use, but it will help keep it away from young teens. She stated businesses will lose about 2% of tobacco sales which should be weighed against the possibility of keeping someone from smoking at an early age. She stated studies have shown that the younger someone starts smoking, the odds of them stopping drop.

Mr. Calvin stated the 2% figure is a statistic that is not universal. He stated it may be accurate with some stores but it varies between locations. He stated for most convenience stores, cigarettes are a “destination product” for adult customers, which means it gets customers in the store with the hope that they will buy other items while in the store. He stated the retailer is depending on those ancillary sales. He stated New York leads the country in cigarette smuggling at 57%, meaning that over half the cigarettes consumed in New York are purchased without the

collection of State cigarette tax or enforcement of the tobacco purchase age. He stated this is a major source for teenagers to access cigarettes.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she believes raising the age to 21 will still help work towards the goal of cutting back juvenile smoking. She stated 96% of adults who smoke today started before the age of 18. She stated the healthcare costs incurred by people who smoke are very high.

Mr. Calvin stated while those statements are true, it does not mean raising the age to 21 is the right solution. He stated it is still legal for minors to smoke.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated 22 counties in New York have raised the age to 21.

Mr. Calvin stated for every county in New York that has raised the age, there are two (2) that have not. He suggested that Putnam County consider a law making it illegal for minors to possess tobacco.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she cannot see adding that to the police force's duties.

Legislator Albano stated any effect on helping prevent young people from smoking is a good thing. He stated he would support a law against minors possessing tobacco, but it would be hard to implement. He stated raising the age would send the right message.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated smoking is an addictive habit and it is a crossover drug to problems later on.

Mr. Calvin stated he does not dispute that, only the choice of the solution.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she understands the perspective of the retailers however she believes the health and safety of constituents is more important.

Acting Commissioner Nesheiwat stated he believes retailers would sell other items to make up for the lost sales of tobacco products. He stated he believes raising the tobacco purchase age would work out for an advantage of the people of Putnam County.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman stated one of the first jobs of elected officials is to keep constituents safe, particularly children. She questioned if there is an average dollar amount that a convenience store would lose if the age is raised.

Mr. Calvin stated there is no average dollar amount available.

Councilwoman Eckardt stated she believes Dutchess County did not proceed with raising the age due to there being a military exemption included in the legislation. She stated she supports raising the age to 21.

Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Joseph DeMarzo stated most young people start their addiction with alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana. He stated the school districts have been reaching out due to the prevalence of vaping products. He stated 84% of people who are in addictions services smoke cigarettes. He stated the costs of addiction services are very expensive.

Legislator Castellano questioned if the 2% figure was of just tobacco sales or all sales.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated it is 2% of the tobacco sales.

Legislator Castellano stated he is on the fence with this issue. He stated he believes that the Federal or State Government should be handling this issue. He stated he is against smoking. He questioned what the tobacco purchase age is in Danbury, Connecticut because Brewster borders Danbury.

Mr. Calvin stated he believes Connecticut is working on raising the purchase age to 21.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she does not believe 18 years olds will leave the county simply to purchase cigarettes.

Legislator Castellano stated young people in Putnam County go to the Danbury Mall frequently.

Legislator Albano stated this will not solve the entire problem, but it will improve the situation.

Legislator Castellano stated he believes adults should make their own decisions. He mentioned 18 years old can go to war. He stated he believes the black market of transporting cigarettes will increase if the purchase age is raised to 21.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the black market for cigarettes will happen anyway.

Legislator Nacerino stated she agrees with Legislator Castellano. She stated this generation needs to learn to make decisions on their own. She stated she is not in favor of government bans, and she prefers raising awareness about issues. She stated minors drink alcohol and smoke marijuana even though it is illegal.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated, along with the raising the age proposal, the One Army in the War on Addiction Task Force (Task Force) has decided to move forward with legislation that requires retailers that sell vape products to get licenses. She stated this would allow the County to keep track of where the vaping products are sold. She stated right now, retailers do not have to be licensed to sell vaping products if they do not also sell tobacco products. She stated vaping is a very big problem in our schools.

Legislator Nacerino noted that vaping products are commonly purchased online. She stated this will not solve the problem.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated it will not solve the problem but it will help.

Legislator Nacerino requested clarification on the proposed Dutchess County law that included a military exemption.

Mr. Calvin stated Dutchess County included an amendment that excluded active military from a potential tobacco purchase age of 21. He stated it was not passed by Dutchess County.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the Military is in favor of raising the age to 21 due to the health effects from smoking.

Legislator Castellano stated he believes smoking will continue to decrease with time.

Barbara Illardi, Public Health Information Officer, stated Connecticut is looking to raise the age to 21.

Legislator Nacerino stated this matter should be handled by the State.

Legislator Gouldman stated he is also on the fence with this issue.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated at next month's committee meeting there will be a draft law ready for discussion.

#### **Item #5 - Verbal Update/One Army in the War on Addiction Task Force/Chairwoman Scuccimarra**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the Task Force extensively discussed the tobacco purchase age. She stated every member of the Task Force has been professionally dealing with the effects of addiction for many years and they all recommend raising the age to 21.

#### **Item #6 - Discussion/Plastic Bags/Jeremy Cherson, Advocacy Coordinator at Riverkeeper**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra introduced Jeremy Cherson, Advocacy Coordinator at Riverkeeper, who has been educating different areas on what is going on with plastics.

Coordinator Cherson introduced Jordan Christensen, Hudson Valley Program Coordinator at Citizens Campaign for the Environment. He provided the committee with the Westchester and Ulster County proposals to deal with plastic bags, along with additional scientific information.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional and other business; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Coordinator Cherson gave the attached PowerPoint presentation. He stated studies have shown that people use single use plastic bags for about 12 minutes before disposal. He stated the world is now seeing the effects of using plastics for the past 50 years. He stated there are large gyres in the Pacific Ocean known as the "Great Pacific Garbage Patches" which are around the size of Alaska. He stated the garbage in these gyres come from land sources, via rivers and estuaries.

He stated these plastics breakdown and are ingested by marine life. He stated New York State uses approximately 23 billion plastic bags per year.

Coordinator Christensen stated it is now estimated that by weight, there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans by 2050. She stated there is already more plastic in the ocean than plankton.

Coordinator Cherson stated Riverkeeper did a study with Columbia University and found that there are high concentrations of microplastics in the estuaries of the Hudson River. He stated Columbia University has also found that wildlife in the area have ingested microplastics. He stated studies have shown that PCBs and other toxins adhere to microplastics.

Legislator Albano questioned if there is any sort of filtration that works on microplastics.

Coordinator Christensen stated unfortunately there is not.

Coordinator Cherson stated in 2009 New York State passed a law requiring certain retailers to recycle plastic bags, but this has not raised the plastic bag recycling rate as hoped.

Legislator Albano stated most people do not know that plastic bags have to be recycled in certain places. He stated there should be more done to raise awareness in regards to this issue.

Coordinator Christensen stated there is not much incentive to recycle the plastic bags properly because it is easier and cheaper to make new plastic bags instead of recycled ones.

Coordinator Cherson stated the resource recovery center in Ulster County just keeps the plastics bags in a warehouse.

Legislator Nacerino stated she is opposed to imposing a fee on plastic bags. She stated she does not believe it would help the problem. She stated an extra expense is not good for constituents.

Legislator Albano suggested a refundable deposit for a plastic bag.

Coordinator Christensen stated the recommended measure to take is a hybrid system of a fee and a ban. She stated Chicago banned plastic bags but this increased their waste. She stated California banned the thin plastic bags and placed a fee on all other types of bags, to incentivize using reusable bags.

Coordinator Cherson stated there is an economic concept called “loss aversion” which states that people are more inclined to change their behavior if they are going to lose something. He stated Los Angeles County saw a 94% decrease in their plastic bags.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned what their policy is.

Coordinator Christensen stated thin plastic bags are banned and the thicker plastic bags along with paper bags have a 10 cent fee.

Coordinator Cherson stated the LA Times did an editorial that showed that people adjusted well to the new policy and were not paying the fee because they remember to use their reusable bags.

Coordinator Christensen went over the results of the fee policy in Suffolk County. She stated in the first four (4) months plastic bag use went from 70% to 30% and reusable bag use went from 5% to 43%. She stated the fee matters to people and creates a behavior change.

Legislator Nacerino requested clarification on Suffolk County's policy.

Coordinator Christensen stated it is a 5 cent fee on both paper and plastic bags.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if there are any statistics on reusable bags and the potential for bacteria.

Coordinator Christensen stated reusable bags should be washed periodically, but do not need to be washed after each use.

Legislator Nacerino stated people could just leave their reusable bags in the trunk of their car, which could lead to bacteria growing.

Coordinator Christensen stated there have been municipalities with these policies in place for almost a decade and there have been no problems with plastic bags.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how fast food or take out restaurants are affected by these laws.

Coordinator Christensen stated restaurants are not included in these laws.

Legislator Albano stated he has noticed restaurants using paper straws instead of plastic.

Coordinator Cherson stated Starbucks has announced they would stop using all plastic straws by 2020.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, questioned if there have been any microplastics found in freshwater fish.

Coordinator Christensen stated yes, microplastics were found in a freshwater pond on Long Island. She stated this was alarming because it was not expected to be a problem.

Councilwoman Eckardt stated she believes people could get used to not using plastic bags.

Coordinator Cherson stated the change would not happen overnight. He stated some municipalities set up ways to educate constituents on the policy changes.

Legislator Gouldman stated business groups should be involved in rolling out education on the policy.

Coordinator Christensen stated the Food Industry Alliance were involved in Suffolk County.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she spoke with grocery stores and they do not want the plastic bags used.

Legislator Gouldman noted that if paper is used more, there could be a problem with using too many trees.

Coordinator Cherson stated that is why having a fee on paper bags is important.

Legislator Gouldman questioned who receives the fee.

Coordinator Christensen stated in New York it has to go back to the retailer.

Legislator Castellano questioned how much plastic bags cost to make.

Coordinator Christensen stated the thin plastic bags cost 1-2 cents and the paper costs 5-10 cents.

Legislator Castellano suggested a discount for people who use reusable bags at grocery stores.

Coordinator Christensen stated for some reason that idea does not work with consumers.

Legislator Nacerino questioned how people who use food stamps would be affected.

Coordinator Christensen stated most municipalities exempt food stamps.

Legislator Castellano questioned how to have grocery stores give a discount to people who used reusable bags.

Coordinator Christensen stated she is unsure the feasibility and legality of doing that.

Legislator Albano stated he agrees with Legislator Nacerino that he does not want to impose a fee on consumers but the statistics have shown that the approach works.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this is about changing people's mindsets and many people will not change unless their money is affected. She stated education and awareness need to be addressed as well.

### **Item #9 - Approval/"Think Differently" Resolution**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this will raise the awareness in how the community helps people with special needs.

Legislator Nacerino stated she loves this initiative.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move “Think Differently” Resolution to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #10 - Approval/Proposed Synthetic Drug Law**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the law is not ready to be voted on. She stated the Law Department will have it ready for the next committee meeting.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if this law will be enforceable.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the law will mirror Westchester County’s Synthetic Drug Law, but noted that enforcement could be an issue.

**Item #11 - Other Business**

**a. Discussion/Impact of Abandoned Fishing Nets on Marine Life/Legislator Nacerino**

Legislator Nacerino stated this is in the same vein as the plastic bag issue. She stated there are abandoned plastic fishing nets in our waterways. She stated these pose an increasingly global threat to marine life, as they could get entangled. She stated 640,000 tons of these fishing nets are used per year. She stated plastic bags are not the only thing polluting our water.

**Item #12 – Adjournment**

There being no further business at 7:29pm, Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.